

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-01

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-20

USIA-06 DRC-01 /058 W

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R 111136Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1709

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 2865

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINT, CE

SUBJ: PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO JAFFNA

REF: COLOMBO 2771

1. SUMMARY: MRS. BANDARANAIKE'S VISIT TO JAFFNA TOOK PLACE OCTOBER 5 - 6 IN ATMOSPHERE OF TIGHT SECURITY AND ONLY LIMITED PUBLIC PARTICIPATION. HER CROWDS REPORTEDLY WERE MORE CONTRIVED THAN VOLUNTARY BUT AT SAME TIME TAMIL UNITED FRONT (TUF) FAILED TO AROUSE OVERT RESPONSE TO CALL FOR PUBLIC BOYCOTT OF VISIT. PM APPEATED FOR TAMI
8ENTRY INTO MAINSTEAM OF NATIONAL LIFE AND
PRIMISED "FAIRLY EARLY" KANKESANTURAI BY-ELECTION. GENERAL REACION OF PM AND GOVERNMENT IS THAT VISIT WAS A SUCCESS, YET IT REMAINS ONLY FIRST STEP IN BRIDGING VERY WIDE GAP SEPARATING TAMILS FROM UNITED FRONT (UF)GOVERNMENT.
END SUMMARY.

2. PRIME MINISTER BANDARANAIKE'S FIRST VISIT TO JAFFNA PENISNULA, OCTOBER 5 - 6,PROCEEDED ON SCHEDULE, UMARRRED BY INCIDENTS, A MIXED SUCCESS. SURROUNDED BY TIGHT SECURITY SCREEN, PM CARRIED OUT HER ENTIRE PROGRAM,
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INCLUDING SEVERAL ADDRESSES, IN ATMOSPHERE THAT REPORTEDLY

WAS CONTROLLED AND COOL. CENTRAL EVENT WAS OPENING OF NEW NORTHERN CAMPUS OF UNIVERSITY. GENERAL PUBLIC WAS CONSPICUOUS BY ITS RELUCTANCE TO TURN OUT FOR VISIT, WHILE THOSE CROWDS THAT WERE IN EVIDENCE WHERE MRS. BANDARANAIKE SPOKE HAD BEEN CAREFULLY ASSEMBLED, SOME BUSES COMING FROM AS FAR AS COLOMBO. NONETHELESS, BOYCOTT PROMISED BY TUF APPARENTLY FAILED TO AROUSE ANY OVERT RESPONSE, LEAVING PM IN UNDISPUTED SPOTLIGHT.

3. IN HER SEVERAL SPEECHES, MRS. BANDARANAIKE BORE DOWN HARD ON LOSS TO TAMILS RESULTING FROM THEIR SUPPORT OF "TAMIL COMMUNAL PARTIES." SHE SPOKE FRANKLY AND AT LENGTH

ABOUT COMMUNAL RELATIONS IN SRI LANKA, ASSERTING THAT COMMUNAL PARTIES HAD DISAPPEARED AMONG SINHALESE, IN PART BECAUSE OF HER EFFORTS TO EDUCATE SINHALESE. POINTING TO HIGH INCOME OF JAFFNA FARMERS UNDER AGRICULTURAL POLICIES OF UFG, PM APPEALED TO TAMILS "TO ENTER INTO THE MAINSTREAM OF NATIONAL LIFE AND INTO THE ARENA OF NATIONAL POLITICS" AS ONLY MEANS OF ACHIEVING LEVERAGE AND INFLUENCE. MRS. BANDARANAIKE PROMISED THAT BY-ELECTION FOR KANKESANTURAI ASSEMBLY SEAT, WHICH UFG HAS REFUSED TO HOLD SINCE TUF LEADER S.J.V. CHELVANAYAKAM RESIGNED FROM IT IN PROTEST TWO YEARS AGO, WILL BE HELD "FAIRLY EARLY." SHE FAILED, HOWEVER, TO LIVE UP TO PREDICTIONS THAT SHE WOULD ANNOUNCE RELEASE OF DETAINED TAMIL MILITANTS, HELD WITHOUT CHARGES FOR LAST 18 MONTHS.

3. ACCORDING TO PAO, WHO ATTENDED PUBLIC FUNCTIONS OF OCTOBER 6, ATMOSPHERE AMONG PRIME MINISTER AND HER PARTY WAS ONE OF JUBILATION OVER SUCCESS OF VISIT. THIS WAS ECHOED NEXT DAY IN SEPARATE COMMENTS TO AMBASSADOR AT GDR RECEPTION BY TWO MINISTERS AND INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE. ALL OF THEM STATED THAT VISIT WAS SUCCESSFUL, UNDERSCORING THAT NO ACTS OF VIOLENCE HAD BEEN COMMITTED.

4. COMMENT: REAL QUESTION CONCERNING VISIT IS WHETHER IT WILL REMAIN A STAGE GESTURE OR WILL BE FOLLOWED UP BY CONCRETE EFFORTS TO BRIDGE GAP BETWEEN TAMILS AND UD. FACT REMAINS THAT THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE OF SLACKENING CONFIDENTIAL

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SUPPORT FOR TUF AMONG NORTHERN TAMILS. EVEN THE GOVERNMENT'S MAIN EFFORT TO DATE--OPENING OF JAFFNA CAMPUS OF NATIONAL UNIVERSITY--ALTHOUGH REALIZED AT NO LITTLE COST, HAS BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY SOME OPPOSITION AND CONTROVERSY. (IT IS OF INTEREST TO NOTE THAT IN ALL OF SPEECHES AT CAMPUS OPENING ONLY ONE REFERENCE WAS MADE TO JAFFNA COLLEGE, LONG FUNDED BY U.S. CHURCH GROUP, GSL TAKE-OVER OF WHICH FOR UNIVERSITY HAS BEEN SOURCE OF SOME BITTERNESS IN JAFFNA.) TO

OVERCOME WIDESPREAD FEELING OF DISCRIMINATION AND ALIENATION,
UFG WILL NEED TO FOLLOW UP VISIT AND NEW CAMPUS WITH OTHER
INDICATIONS THAT TAMILS COUNT IN ITS EYES.
VAN HOLLEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HEAD OF GOVERNMENT VISITS, BOYCOTTS, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 OCT 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: elyme
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974COLOMB02865
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740290-0732
From: COLOMBO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741053/aaaabtec.tel
Line Count: 119
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: COLOMBO 2771
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: elyme
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16-Aug-2002 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <06 MAR 2003 by elyme>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO JAFFNA
TAGS: PINT, CE, TAMIL UNITED FRONT-TUF, (BANDARANAIKE, SIRIMAVO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005